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## THE RELIGIOUS POETRY OF SCHILLER

### I.

Three years ago an anniversary celebration of an "entrance into larger life" profoundly stirred the German world. In America it had its remote echo: the essay of Dr. Paul Carus, entitled "Friedrich Schiller: A Sketch of His Life, and an Appreciation of His Poetry," quoting passages and entire poems in translation from Bowring and Bulwer-Lytton.

Touching, to me, was the great "Volksausgabe" or popular edition, containing, in 488 pages of double columns, fairly spaced and legible, the poems and the plays of the beloved singer of German ideals. A truly serviceable memorial, this, giving the poorest workingman at a nominal price enough to encourage and cheer, refine and charm any honest soul for a natural lifetime. A pathetic witness, too, our big, honest, inexpensive quarto, to the pious love Schiller sang into the hearts of his countrymen. A great German poet all must admit him now; too rhetorical perhaps to endure translation so well as Goethe, having (but for Coleridge) never engaged the interest of a first-rate translator, almost limited therefore in appeal to his "speech-brethren" by his over-dependence on verbal melody, and suggestive resonance of phrase, and the sad lack of some FitzGerald; still, of the European singers and poets of the nineteenth century, he seems to-day only less universal than Heine and Leopardi, while none but Byron and Hugo surpass him in cosmopolitan authority. De Musset appears by his side provincial, Tennyson dilettante, Carducci pedantic. Over-praised at first, and then impudently patronized, he survives for us as the incarnation of the spirit of Teutonic philosophy; sublime hope beyond disillusion, exalted withdrawal to the hallowed privacy of the virile soul, stoic courage unto perfect self-mastery, when the lack of *Welt-politik* tempted his people to indulge in an inglorious hysterical *Welt-Schmerz*.

Who lives in glass houses should be gracious from prudential motives. And what translator does not dread a smooth pebble of the brook from the scrip of some ruddy shepherd boy? Yet

here we are still dependent in the main on Edgar A. Bowring (nay, your pardon, Sir Edgar) for our diffused (or rather undiffused) English knowledge of Schiller.<sup>1</sup> And, alas, what inconceivable ignorance of German was not his at critical moments! Particularly when we deal with the subtle poems of thought and spiritual insight does this failure to understand secondary meanings of the words, and idiomatic turns of phrase become disastrous, if not irritatingly droll. When, for instance, because of "Schein's" several meanings, a "bond's falling due" is metamorphosed into the "fading of a dream," we hardly know — in so serious a poem as "Resignation" — how we should becomingly take the unintended practical joke. Would that such things happened to us in life! And alas, more miracles occur of this sort when least expected. For instance, in "Fortune" (*Das Glück*) the secret birth of Venus out of the infinite sea, becomes an "ill-defined form," and poor Minerva is forced into an antithesis of sudden maturity; whereas the poet had intended both the gracious and the severe goddesses to illustrate the same principle of veiled beginnings for all things divinely great.

But of such like irritating blunders enough. Must Schiller endure popularization among English lovers of poetry through such a much-stained and smoked glass, lest the reader's eye be not compelled to see darkly enough for ethical enthusiasm and mystic glammers?

To our rescue came, six years ago, a piece of translating, self-advertised as conscientious, and that at times makes us long for a more elegant paraphrase — such as FitzGerald gave us of Calderon — but, nevertheless, does manfully assist us to the straight-forward sense for the most part, and not unseldom to some intimation of the eloquent fervour.

And yet of the two above indicated passages the latter only is well rendered by Arnold-Forster,<sup>2</sup> whereas the former follows Bowring into the same misunderstanding of the troublesome idiom.

Now years of earnest battling with problems intellectual, as

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<sup>1</sup> The Poems of Schiller, Edgar A. Bowring, *Bohn's Library*.

<sup>2</sup> The Poems of Schiller, E. P. Arnold-Forster. (Henry Holt & Co. 1902.)

they affected the real life-struggles of self and fellowman, have perhaps tended, with some lovers of poetry, to an unconscious overstress of the didactic. Indubitably it was some such bias that induced Matthew Arnold to estimate so extravagantly the merits of Wordsworth and Byron, and to dis-esteem Percy Bysshe Shelley so pitifully. He could not, doubtless, perceive just how the subjective idealism of our most ethereal singer might be turned to practical account in a British struggle for spiritual existence! So, aware of this peril, most of us at times are disposed, by reaction, to question our own longest and deepest loves for poetic oracles. Sophocles and Shakespeare and their admitted peers we will not hesitate to enthrone above temperamental disputes. But Leopardi, Hugo, Schiller (not to mention Arnold himself), Browning, Emerson, Tennyson and Rossetti, do modestly fetch a blush to our critical countenance, and haunt our proselyting courage with apologetic strains!

What shall a man say for himself when he remembers his boyish dotage on Longfellow; his unearthly thrills in the solitude of wood and mountain, when Schiller took him up astride his private Pegasus beyond the "intense inane?" Sweet memories, holy prejudices! Must we turn and rend the inspirers of our boyish years? Yet, on the other hand, shall we impose outgrown idolatries on those spirits of to-day who are born to larger freedom of outlook, and a chaster, more educated taste?

Ever since that centennial celebration of the poet's death, I for one have been re-reading, every little while, my Schiller, blessing (with mental reservations) Sir Edgar and Bulwer-Lytton<sup>3</sup>—shaking my head at Arnold-Forster ominously, and pondering an onslaught on them who superciliously venture to ignore the claims of Germany's darling bard.

A Burns, a Chatterton, a Keats in one; to these add Wordsworth and a suspicion of the Landorian dignity and classic aloofness; fail not to assume the "mighty line" of Marlowe, and somewhat of the youthful rebellion and melancholy of Byron—and then perhaps for him, who knows not Schiller

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<sup>3</sup>The Poems and Ballads of Schiller, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton. (Reprint), Crowell & Co.

in the original, a notion of the German adoration may gently dawn on his bewildered eye.

The ballads gave to Schiller the hearts of the plain people; the plays secured the more sophisticated; and on these two performances must rest, no doubt, his reputation. "The Ring of Polycrates," "The Cranes of Ibycus," "The Fight with the Dragon," and "The Diver"—are, by common consent, achievements of the very first order. Even to-day "Maria Stuart" and "Wilhelm Tell" appear gracious, warm creations, that bind us with a spell of dramatic eloquence, which we are too grateful to disavow. Yet for those of us who believe in the prophetic office of the poet; who suspect that the test of life's aching needs is some warrant of moral truth in the preacher's deliverance; and that the æsthetic suasion of his form, coercing the sensitive poet, assists to chasten spiritual extravagance, to render sweet and sane the religious quest; for those who, while they would not bring ethical and dogmatic criticism to bear directly on the creations of the poet—to gyve his feet or clip his pinions—yet cannot but believe that (other things being equal) a poem gains much by its ability to feed our "moral being" and sustain our aspiration; for us, and the like of us, surely, an inventory of Schiller's lyric and epigrammatic poems of moral and religious thought, will not prove wholly valueless. For them, however, who reck nothing of such adventitious desert in things of beauty, we have no irate rebuke—only a courteous dismissal to the exquisite company of the "art for art's sake" guides into Elysian fields.

## II.

From the poems of Schiller's "first period" little falls within the scheme we have proposed. The afflatus of the "Robbers" is not to be denied. Lovers of the "Gothic romance," so-called, may rejoice therein. Anne Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, Bulwer-Lytton, Edgar Allen Poe and Co., should never be without literary progeny. Yet, to have survived and outlived a "Storm and Stress" period of perfervid adolescence is, for a poet, no small luck and praise.

So we note, only in passing, the manful self-assertion that

expressed itself in Burns' immortal song, "A man's a man for a' that," and much less worthily, we regret to say, in Schiller's piece of verse-strutting, *Männerwürde*, and his honest rebuke to a pompous Pharisee:

A man am I. Who's more a man?  
 Who claims to be? Go, spring  
 Freely under God's shining sun,  
 And lustily leap and sing!

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, if through ice of the sophistic mind  
 The warm blood hath a little gladlier purled;  
 What may not be achieved of human kind  
 Leave thou to denizens of a better world.

My earthly fellow doth the spirit immure,  
 Though heaven-begotten; and behold, I can  
 Nowise become a holy angel pure:  
 So let me follow him, and be a man!

Far more profoundly are we moved, however, by certain poems of the second period, especially the three: *Der Kampf* (The Conflict), *Resignation*, and *Die Götter Griechenlands* (The Gods of Greece). The first stanza of his Hymn of Joy (*An die Freude*) had the signal honor to become part of Beethoven's Choral Symphony. The Goddess of Joy makes all her votaries kin. And youth feels itself made solely to possess her forever! The moments when the human race triumphed signally we may therefore assimilate in our young enthusiasm, delighting in the personal value we assign to them as self-expression. "*Afflavit deus, et dissipati sunt*" The vessels of our foe are scattered over the vasty deep. What youthful heart does not beat high?

But, however fancy and imagination may so transport us, we return ever in due time to our own single self; and there in our life we front quite another spectacle:

No, I will fight this giant fight no longer,—  
 The fight of duty and sacrifice.  
 If the heart's hot rage to soothe, thou be no stronger,  
 Virtue, ask not of me such cruel price.  
 Sworn have I, yea, most bindingly have sworn it,  
 To wrestle with myself for mastery:

Have back thy victor's wreath ; though I have worn it,  
I'll wear it never. To sin let me be free!

What biographically the immediate nature of the fight may have been is of no poetic consequence. Indeed, the last stanza profits by its very ambiguity, thereby getting reaches of significance that belong to the uttermost of man's aspiration:

Fair and dear soul, trust not this angel-seeming,  
For crime, thy piteous kindness arms me now.  
In the infinite realms with life's fair marvels teeming  
Is there another fairer prize than thou?

Or than the very crime I flee from, ever?  
O fate most tyrannous;—  
The prize to crown my virtuous will's endeavor  
Doth slay my virtue — thus!

Howbeit, only on condition of ascetic self-denial may higher quests enjoy their fair fruition. Not that any mystic merit of the sacrifice secures our reward. Not that there has been providential malice in the universal order requiring our deliberate purchase with pain of the more enduring pleasure. Merely, that to no one may all at once be granted. With our inevitable, quite innocent limits of time and space and vitality, choice must be exercised as discreetly as may be, and the consequences abided by. This simple fact, when first intimately realized, causes each soul in turn acutest suffering; and hence to mankind the promises of compensation in some life-to-come have been reiterated pathetically, and cherished in sheer despair of egoism. On these Schiller will not place reliance:

I also in Arcadia was born;  
And in my childish years,  
Nature to grant me happiness hath sworn.  
I also in Arcadia was born,  
Yet my short springtide yielded only — tears!

Enumerating his sacrifices, his illusions, and disillusionments, shrinking from the cynical onlooker who recks not of invisible treasures, disquieted, disconsolate, all but remorseful for the irrevocable worthy choice, he obtains this oracle:

"I love with one love all my children," cried  
A genius veiled from sight.

"Children of men, hearken; two flowers abide  
The prudent seeker, blowing side by side,—  
Hope and immediate Delight."

Who hath one blossom cullèd of the twain,  
Let him not crave her sister-bloom.  
Who hath not faith—enjoy! This lore's refrain,  
Old as the world: whoso hath faith—abstain!  
The world's recorded life—its Day of doom.

Hope hath been thine; then hast thou gained thy due.  
Thy faith—the grace awarded thee!  
Thou shouldst have asked thy wise men, for they knew:  
What might not of the moment's flight accrue,  
Shall be restored not of eternity!

Schiller's famous elegy on departed Hellenic polytheism—"the Gods of Greece"—has been fluently rendered by Mr. Arnold-Forster. That most pregnant epigram, however, which ends the poem, is not Englished with sufficient pungency:

And Fancy, crushed by life's stern pressure,  
Lives but in poetry sublime,

is more elegant, but not so direct as Bowring's:

All that is to live in endless song,  
Must in life-time first be drowned,

although it was not Schiller who specified a watery grave!

Again our subject is the question of a definite choice. Immortal life in song (that is long continued influence through the better part of man, his imagination and craving for the ideal) must first make itself known, ay more, deliver its credentials by tragic catastrophe:

*Was unsterblich im Gessang soll leben,  
Muss im Leben untergehn.*

All that in Poesy shall live forever  
Must perish first in actual life.

With this insight, the poet Schiller, conscious of his divine call, could himself forego pleasure, and refrain from passion, not without intimations perhaps of his own early end. He too, must accept his destiny, and serve as an incentive, and live so that the spell of his verse should be reinforced by the idealiza-



tion of his personal career. Surely a fate deserving from happier men no unworthy pity!

Not that the young poet will fail at moments to regret the days of unreasonable expectations, and will hush melodious complaints which are themselves consolatory. So the elegy called "Ideals" makes an irresistible appeal to all who can love the palpitant life of youth in retrospect:

Ah, cruel, must thou then depart  
And leave me joyless and alone,  
Forgetful of what joy and smart  
In close communion we have known?  
Can nothing thy departure stay,  
Thou golden stage of earthly time?  
'Tis vain: thy billows roll away  
To the eternal sea sublime. (A-F., p. 113.)

For eight more stanzas Schiller reviews the losses and bewails them, ending as the undefeated man, whose vocation, and the fellowship it earns for him, suffice to keep him erect, with countenance of resolute cheer, face forward:

Of all that merry company,—  
Which stood beside me to the last?  
Which comforted my parting sigh?  
Which will abide when all is past?  
Friendship, 'tis thou, whose healing balm,  
Is lightly spread o'er every wound,  
Sharing our ills with loving calm;  
Thou whom I early sought and found.  
  
And Labor, thou, who, hand in hand  
With her, can exercise the soul;  
Who canst all weariness withstand;  
Whose solid tasks with time unroll,  
Although thou travail, grain by grain,  
To rear Eternity sublime;  
Years, minutes, days, thou canst detain  
From the tremendous debt of Time. (p. 113.)

In two at least of the ballads we seem to hear echoes of that oracle that came to him, so unambiguous and not to be denied: "Whoso hath faith — abstain!"

The classical allegory of the divine envy serves to illustrate the principle that not all can be had which the heart desires; nay, what is more, all that should not be had, even if accorded of

a partial fate. Polycrates, after exhibitions of incredible good fortune is admonished by his friend:

Wouldst thou immunity from grief?  
Then pray the Gods, in kind relief,  
To shade thy luck with sorrow's tone.  
No man true happiness has gained  
On whom the generous Gods have rained  
Untempered benefits alone. (A.-F., p. 156.)

In the "Cranes of Ibycus," by the operation of an Æschylean Chorus of the Furies, two murderers of the expected winner of poetic laurels, stand self-confessed. The awe is realized with great dramatic force, and we feel that somehow this was with Schiller a very real experience. He was not cold-bloodedly constructing a ballad to illustrate Kant's conception of the "categorical imperative;" he was imparting to us, by a tale, something of his own shudder at the mystery of conscience:

And between truth and wonderment  
Each quaking heart with doubt is rent,  
And worships the tremendous might  
Which, all unseen, protects the right;  
Unfathomable, unexplained,  
By which the threads of Fate are spun,  
Deep in the human heart contained,—  
Yet ever hiding from the sun.<sup>4</sup> (A.-F., p. 162.)

But our quest of truth has ever been at the expense of conscience. Always the old was settled in rightful possession. The new appeared as rebel, as invader. The youth, therefore, who would unveil the Image of Truth at Sais was indeed to Schiller more than the hero of a legend.

Far heavier than thou deemest  
Is this thin gauze, my son. Light to thy hand  
It may be—but most weighty to thy conscience.  
(Bowring, p. 191.)

He lifted the veil. He saw. And never did he publish his vision;—only lived to warn all questioners:

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<sup>4</sup> Again here our complaint is that the translation seems to narrow the broad statements somewhat more to the particular situation than do the resonant lines of the original stanza.

“Woe—woe to him who treads through guilt to TRUTH.”<sup>5</sup>

The Truth even can be approached no otherwise than as God’s law doth allow.<sup>6</sup> But the poets with all other artists have their custody of more than truth:

Ye hold in trust the honour of mankind.  
Guard it! With yours ’tis closely intertwined.  
The charm of poetry we rightly deem  
Part of creation’s well-appointed scheme.  
Let it roll on and melt into the sea  
Of a divinely blended harmony . . .  
When Truth is taunted by its proper age,  
Let her appeal to the poetic page  
And seek a refuge in the Muse’s choir.  
Her real claims more readily inspire  
Respect, that they are shrouded o’er with grace.  
May she in song forever find a place,  
And on her dastard enemies shall rain  
Avenging pæans in triumphal strain. . . .

Ye freeborn scions of a mother free,  
Press onward firmly with exalted eyes;  
Perfected beauty only may ye see,  
And lesser crowns ye need not stoop to prize!  
The sister missing in this present sphere  
Clasped to her mother’s bosom ye shall find;  
What lofty souls as beautiful revere  
Must noble be, and perfect of its kind.  
Poised high above your life-appointed span,  
Let your ecstatic pinions freely swell.

The dawning image in your mirror scan,  
And the approaching century foretell.  
By thousand paths and many devious ways  
Through every varied turning ye shall glide  
To welcome in the fulness of her days  
Harmonious concord, your delight and guide.

(A.-F., p. 97.)

With so deep a conviction, then, of his vocation, and with so exalted a faith in the divine function thus allowed him, why should the poet refuse to be deprived (by his great ministry of

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<sup>5</sup> Bulwer-Lytton’s version.

<sup>6</sup> The two ballads of Cassandra and the Diver each relate themselves to the same thought: To know what the Gods would conceal shall avail no man; to explore it, instinctively aware of tempting God—shall end in destruction.

delight) of what the common lot offers to mankind? Having friendship and work, knowing the tragic law of higher life through death, apprehending the oracle of necessary choice,—why should not the poet be of good cheer, even though Zeus seems to have divided out the earth already, reserving for him no equitable portion? His high-priesthood was, to be sure, foreseen:

Part of creation's well-appointed scheme.

And so, it could not have been, after all, an oversight, albeit the ballad entitled "The Partition of the World," so has it:

"If thou to dwell in dreamland hast elected,"  
 Replied the God, "lay not the blame on me.  
 Where wast thou when the sharing was effected?"  
 "I was," the Poet said, "by thee.

"Mine eye upon thy countenance was dwelling,  
 Thy heavenly harmony entranced mine ear;  
 Forgive the mind, thine influence compelling  
 Rendered oblivious of this sphere!"

"What can I do?" said Zeus. "For all is given;  
 The harvest, sport, the markets, all are seized.  
 But, an thou choose to live with me in heaven,  
 Come when thou wilt, and I shall be well pleased."

(A.-F., p. 221.)

So much for the prophetic revelation Schiller had as poet; a double assurance of the worth of intelligent sacrifice of the less excellent for the more perfect; the hallowed privilege of special self-immolation when granted a place near to the gods, and an influence on the lives of his fellow men beyond the span of his own personal life.

### III.

Now in one single poem more than any other did Schiller express persuasively his philosophic counsel of escape from the actual world into what Blake so well calls the "Kingdom of the imagination." If Von Humboldt was advised to study it in "a kind of holy stillness—and banish during the meditation it required all that is profane,"<sup>1</sup> surely other readers less

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by Bulwer-Lytton.

philosophically expert, less humanely equipped with spontaneous sympathy, (the very essence of culture), will find it necessary to analyze "Life and the Ideal" reverently and diligently, lest they fall short of its reach. They surely will not deem any assistance amiss provided it be offered in a duly humble spirit. Presuming then to helpfulness, one should tactfully conciliate the perplexed and discouraged students of our noble masterpiece, by confessing to frequent and painstaking perusals, ere the close metaphysics implied by the sententious oracular eloquence of the original (which captivates from the very first) could fully operate as the poet intended; convincing, that is and coercing the spirit to a world-oblivious enthusiasm, to a serene assurance in the possession for the moment at least of a saving truth.

Two translations are familiar to the English reader. Of these Bowring's is again and again abrupt in transition, inelegant, crabbed and awkward; in half a dozen crucial places, besides, it is indisputably incorrect.<sup>8</sup> Bulwer-Lytton's, on the other hand, is prefaced by an analytic account of the contents, to which no doubt the version itself is indebted for its greater coherence. Unfortunately the translator, tracing back the poet's thought to its presumed erudite origins, erred vexatiously by importing into the poetic text such technical terms as 'Archetype' and 'Archetypal man' which Schiller himself very properly chose to eschew. He was in no need as was Bulwer to advertise his scholarship. He was not casting a philosophical essay into verse, but liberating rather a dithyrambic passion for the noblest self-control in an utterance at the same time beautiful and devout. It is not rhymed philosophy, but a philosopher's poetic fervor, for the enjoyment of philosophically educated lovers of poetry. Yet for all its pedantry, not a few felicitous renderings occur in Bulwer's translation:

Short are the joys Possession can bestow,  
And in Possession sweet Desire will die.

Or again:

Let man no more the will of Jove withstand,  
And Jove the bolt lets fall.

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<sup>8</sup> *e.g.* Opening stanzas, 5, 6, the latter half of stanza 11. Stanzas 12, 14 and 15 alone seem adequate.

At all events the merit of making "continuous sense," of deference to higher criticism, however erroneous, should be stoutly maintained for this version; although the most attractive stanzas, notably the 10th, 12th and 13th,—are paraphrastically so free as entirely to lose touch with Schiller's obvious meaning. The latter two stanzas indeed, go so far as to destroy the effective form at parallelism established by a quadruple sequence of antithetic stanzas, in which the practical, the æsthetical, the moral and the sentimental man are each bidden courageously accept the conditions of actual life, because they yield the right discipline and exercise to the spirit; whilst all alike should take refuge at need with the ideal, unto reinvigoration and renewal of vision.

The doctrine imparted in Bulwer's version of stanzas XII and XIII may or may not be consonant with Schiller's æsthetic theories; but the verses themselves certainly constitute no adequate rendering of the passage they are intended to represent.

It is a matter for regret that the publisher of Mr. Arnold-Forster's translation should have challenged comparison with Bayard Taylor's "Faust." The anonymous eulogist whom he quotes, "among the highest authorities on German Literature in America," most likely disdained to make a painstaking examination of some didactic piece (where faithfulness counts for almost everything), the original in hand, Bulwer-Lytton to right and Bowring to left of him, as fences limiting fancy to the possible in a translator's English. For so he could have easily ascertained, even on the most cursory inspection, how our belauded latest renderer of *Das Ideal und das Leben* glides over the crucial difficulties with an irritating insouciance, letting the thought-context shift for itself as best it may. Bayard Taylor, whatever his shortcomings as verse-wright on his own account, never failed to grapple the most intimate sense of Goethe (a more elusive and subtle poet, to say the least, than Schiller), nor to wrestle right manfully with his own mother tongue. If at times, he seems to have been lamed by the struggle, and guilty therefore of a halting quest for some remote locution, compelled in the end to content himself with a wrenched idiom, an erratic or perverse obscurity; never, at least

to our knowledge, did Bayard Taylor in facile rhymes smile his easy satisfaction at having avoided close issue with the ambiguous sense of a suggestive figure, the prismatic efflorescence of a verbal phrase, or such rhythmic virtuosity as will not be transferred from one tongue to another. Mr. Arnold-Forster has offered us, to be sure, a right tuneful series of stanzas. It will however go hard with the reader, we fear, if the poem of Schiller be as yet unfamiliar, and an honest endeavor is made to follow the thought from stanza to stanza in his version. Connectives implied in the German sentence-structure are not regularly supplied: and sometimes precision where the original is vague, and vagueness where it is emphatically precise, makes the task for the deftest, German poem in hand, sufficiently difficult.

Since this paper is written chiefly for such as have little or no German at their command, and considering the very great importance to the lover of poetry and moral science which all students claim for the piece under discussion, it seems only right to offer a quite untechnical elucidatory paraphrase, which he who scorns such aids may easily omit.

#### THE IDEAL AND LIFE

I. Because of the limits set us by our organism, we are constantly forced to a sore decision between alternatives, which are both in their way desirable.

II. Let us then resolutely elect the better, however dear it may cost us to forego the less excellent.

III. Yet man can even now (by creative thought) escape his impotence and insignificance, and dwell in a world not unlike that of Plato's eternal ideas; the world of philosophers, sages, poets and mystics.

IV. Borne thither, we are privileged to behold the Ideal Man, and for our spiritual warfare, the Victory of our Cause.

V. Nor is this entrance into a "Kingdom of the Spirit" meant to relax our efforts on earth, but rather to renew our courage and increase our strength.

VI. In the practical world, whether in sport or in earnest, none can succeed but in proportion to strength, skill and cour-

age; and it is well so, else should weakness, incompetency and cowardice prevail.

VII. Yet the strong, capable and brave stand often in the greatest need of rest; of realizing the stillness and sweetness that characterize the largest life.

VIII. Let no artist presume on his easier access to the world of the imagination; if he would glorify the ideal he beholds, he too must endure hardship.

IX. Should he however lose vision and confidence, he may behold his work, perfect already in divine preëxistence, and so be enabled to toil on for its partial realization here below.

X. [All men are in a true sense artists and poets (endeavoring to create a poem:— their life and character)] and awful indeed is for them the discovery of the inevitable discrepancy between principle and performance.

XI. Yet a species of [Neo-Lutheran] salvation by faith [not altogether unlike the Doctrine of the Theologia Germanica, and the preaching of Tauler] can afford comfort and consolation; for by atonement with God man may within himself adore his God, and share in some degree His bliss.

XII. Notwithstanding, we are not God, and must feel the woes and iniquities of our fellow-men; so that at times we rebel, till our very desire to be at one with God will fail us.

XIII. Yet we learn in due time, that out of human sin and woe, proceed the highest good, purity and bliss; and we permit suffering and anguish to be transfigured [as in hero and martyr] to a thing divine; [in which God claims his human share].

XIV. So at least the old Hellenic Myth would teach us; the divine man was persecuted only to challenge the God in him to fuller manifestation,

XV. Which, when it had fully taken place, reconciled mankind to his passion, and their own.

Now lest this merely utilitarian prose account should not suffice, and the translation of Arnold-Forster appear too Swinburnian in its somnolent mellifluous drift nowhither, between silvery willows awake in twilight mist; a harder, less musical rendering is offered the patient reader, which has been attempted on pur-



pose for his possible profit, although we fear quite doubtful delectation. Whoever enjoys the German, has courteous leave to make merry at its infirmities, or to pass by on the other side. It "claims" nevertheless to be resolutely close to the original, even if not rarely it must entrust the associative values of a noun to epithets nowise in the text; and seek equivalents for Teutonic idioms that will not be Englished without too great violence to usage and the trained ear.

## LIFE AND THE IDEAL

## I

Forever crystal-fair and zephyr-soft  
Life glideth calmly by, where throned aloft  
The blessed Gods on heights Olympian;  
Moons wax and wane,—folk-kindreds come and go —  
But still the roses of their youth will blow  
Changeless 'mid wrack of worlds. Ah me, and man  
Knows the choice merely, dubious and sad,  
Betwixt a thrill of sense and peace of soul!  
The brows of the high Gods alone are glad  
Of the twain wedded to a joyous whole.

## II

Would ye, O sons of men, already be  
Like to the Gods in Death's dominion — free ?  
Then pluck not of his garden's luring fruit.  
On the fair show of things delight your eye;  
Possession yieldeth joys that straightway die,  
Yea, slayeth sweet desire in swift pursuit.  
Even Styx, Demeter's child with black folds nine  
Of fathomless stagnant water, could not hold;  
She grasped the apple and therefore must she pine,  
Chained to the grisly law of Orcus cold.

## III

Howbeit the powers, that weave our darkling fate,  
Beyond the body cannot wreak their hate;  
Free from all tyrannies of time and space,  
Playmate of happy sprites, o'er fields of day,  
Familiar of the Gods, divine as they,  
Form moves enhaloed of immortal grace.  
Would ye soar thither, wafted of her wings,  
Ev'n now? Forthwith, earth's fears beneath you hurled,  
Breaking the clutch of narrow dismal things,  
Escape from life into the Ideal world!

## IV

Young always yonder bideth, without flaw  
 Or blemish earthly—in radiance and awe  
     Of perfect bloom—the form of Man divine;  
 As fared the shades by Stygian marges dumb  
 In quiet sheen through a fabled Elysium;  
     Rather, as stood—the azure for his shrine—  
 The eternal Soul ere to the fleshy tomb  
     She made descent out of her glorious place,  
 When tremble in life the battle's scales with doom,  
     There victory, smiling, greets thee face to face.<sup>9</sup>

## V

Not craven limbs to rescue from the strife,  
 But to refresh the fainting with new life,  
     Doth victory wave her fragrant garland thus!  
 Implacable, howe'er ye yearn for rest,  
 Life hurtleth you on her steep-billowy breast  
     And swift time swirlleth 'round uproarious.  
 But should your courage waver—her wings  
     Adroop for the dread sense of limits dire—  
 Look up into the heights, where beauty brings  
     Your spirits to their goal, and dare aspire!

## VI

When war is waged for lordship or defense—  
 Champion eyes champion, grappling might immense  
     With defter might—at fortune's call or fame's—  
 Bare courage copeth ill with armèd force;  
 Likewise where chariots o'er the dust-choked course  
     Shatter each other in th' heroic games:  
 Valor alone can wrest him prize and praise  
     That beckon from the goal attained; alone  
 The strong shall master fate, and all his days  
     The dastard weakling fall and fail and moan.

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Paul Carus to whom this version was submitted and some of whose suggestions were accepted, takes decided issue here as to the interpretation. The German use of the adjective without its noun renders a delightful ambiguity possible, which the translator is obliged to resolve, supplying the noun he supposes to have been understood. Hence natural differences of opinion. His emendation runs as follows:

Life's phantoms thus by Stygian marges dumb  
 In quiet sheen live in Elysium.  
     Thus too stood she—the azure for her shrine—  
 The Eternal Goddess ere to Pluto's tomb  
     She made descent out of celestial light.  
 Doubtful in life remains our battle's doom  
     While victory here is always within sight.

## VII

Yet see, the river of life, tho' hurling fierce  
Torrents of foam where crags close-hem and pierce  
His stream, doth flow — smooth, gentle, sinuous —  
Thro' visionary calms of Beauty's vale,  
Glassing upon his silver edges pale  
Aurora blithe, or twinkling Hesperus.  
Dissolved in gracious mutual love, and bound  
Together freely in bands of comeliness,  
Here impulse hath and passion respite found;  
And foes ban ire, sweet fellowship to bless.

## VIII

When fashioning genius would a soul create  
In what before was lifeless — fain to mate  
Pure form with substance at his urgent will —  
Bid manful diligence strain every nerve,  
Bid courage vanquish matter, till it serve,  
And the whole purpose of the Thought fulfill:  
Only stern toil, and stubborn quest shall hear  
The murmured runes from deep, hid wells of truth;  
Only the chisel's valiant stroke lays bare  
What lurks within marble block uncouth.

## IX

But if to Beauty's realm thou penetrate,  
Below thee harrieth sloth and leaden weight  
Amid the dust, and the heavy clod it sways.  
Wrung with no aching toil from the crude mass  
Behold, there,—sprung from nothing, come to pass  
Even of herself—thy Vision beyond praise!  
Quelled be thy struggles, all thy doubts allayed  
In a serene content at mastery won;  
For lo, no trace remains of what betrayed  
A human frailty in the work begun!

## X

Whenso in man's poor nakedness ye face  
The majesty of law, your pride abase;  
Guilt even to the holy One draws nigh.  
Well may stout virtue quail before the rays  
Of steadfast truth, and with averted gaze  
Your deeds avoid perfection's searching eye.  
For never mortal but his aim did miss.  
No boat may ferry, and no bridge may bear

Over yon frightful sundering abyss;  
Nor soundeth anchor its swallowing despair.<sup>10</sup>

## XI

Take ye then sanctuary from imprisoning sense  
In the far freedoms of high thought, and hence  
Hath every fear-begotten phantom flown;  
The gap 'twixt purpose and achievement fills :—  
Yea, draw the Godhead close into your wills,  
And he forsakes for you his cosmic throne.  
None but the slave's mind feels a fettering sway,  
Who scorneth of the law its chastening rod;  
For lo, with man's resistance passed away  
The awful sovereignty likewise of God.

## XII

When the great anguish of the human race  
Doth harrow you, and Laókoön's tortured face  
Of dumb woe, choked in the enclaspings snakes,  
Ye front; 'tis just your manhood should rebel,  
And unto heaven proclaim the griefs of hell  
Until your heart for ruthless sorrow breaks.  
'Tis well that Nature's dreadful voice prevail,  
And youth grief-pallid weep with blinded eyes;  
That pangs of death your deathless Self assail,  
Whilst ye for fellow-feeling agonize.

## XIII

But nevermore in yon sun-happy realm  
Where the pure Forms abide, shall overwhelm  
The mind such turbid wash of human woe.  
Not here may pain the soul with grief transpierce,  
Nor blighting tears be shed. The anguish fierce  
Now lives but in the spirit's battle glow;  
Lovely, as hover shimmering rainbow hues  
Over the thunderous rack with sprightly glee;  
So thro' cloud-veils of moody gloom transfuse  
Bright skies of cheer, and still felicity!

## XIV

This lore the ancient myth to all made plain :—  
How Zeus of yore did Herakles constrain

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<sup>10</sup>The metaphor is in the last line resolved by the translator into its moral consolation.

"Nor ever anchor soundeth bottom there"

is a more literal rendering. So in the next stanza (line 4), "twixt purpose and achievement," are supplied to make the sense clearer—at the cost no doubt of some mysterious shudders.

To serve the coward and bear his rule unjust;  
 Humbled he went life's footsore ways, and fought  
 Unceasing; lion and hydra slew, and wrought  
 With his own hands huge labors; yea, and thrust  
 His body quick in Charon's doleful bark  
 To loose dear friends. Dire plagues and burdens great  
 Hera devised, and grievous care and cark —  
 But ev'r his fortitude outsped her hate:

## XV

Until his course was run; until in fire  
 Stripping the earthly raiment, on the pyre  
 The God breathed freely Empyréan airs;  
 Blithe-hearted at his new-got power of flight,  
 Upward he soared from joyful height to height,  
 And down as an ill dream sank earth's dull cares.  
 Olympian harmonies the Man enfold,  
 Transfigured in the shining hall of Zeus.  
 With smile and blush the Goddess, see, doth hold  
 To his lips at last the cup of heavenly bliss.<sup>11</sup>

The poem thus closes with a noble picture of Herakles (not forgetful, doubtless, of the significant fact that he is in the *Enchiridion*, the mythological type which Christian editors of that Stoic tract, replaced by the name of Jesus). We are shown how that human son of Zeus fought his way with stubborn courage against the persecution of the Queen of Heaven, until whatever in him was earthly, perished on the sacred pyre; whereupon the goddess (perchance Hera herself taking Hebe's room) offered him the cup brimming with the nectar of the gods.

So we conclude, in our case also, if heaven oppose, it is but a challenge, a veiled invitation to join the immortals themselves. Let Herakles encourage the victim of outrageous fate, to attain his destiny. And even now — whatever may beyond death await him — there is instantaneous admission to an Olympian

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<sup>11</sup> Should the rhyme "Zeus"—"bliss" give offence, we offer an alternate rendering:

Olympian harmony the Man enfolds  
 In th' hall of Zeus transfigured; ay, and I see  
 To his lips with smile and blush the Goddess holds  
 Her nectar cup of immortality!

peace — the kingdom of imagination, the “realm of pure form” where he may dwell as free man,—aye, as king,—while enduring, perchance, servitude in the flesh and ignominious moral defeat.

What the prosaic summation of this remarkable poem’s doctrines may portend, each competent reader can discern now for himself. For the sake, however, of his integrity of thought, let us protest in advance against any amiable overhaste, because of Schiller’s undoubtedly noble attitude, to denominate him a Christian poet; unless, as the loose manner of some is, any moral worth and spiritual exaltation shall be accorded that dubiously honest courtesy, by our liberal Christendom!

The most Schiller has to say of immortality is — that we seem born for something better:

It is no vain, deluding thought  
Which from disordered fancy springs;  
By hope our hearts are plainly taught  
That we are born for better things.  
That inward voice, if we believe,  
The hoping soul will not deceive.

(“Hope,” A.-F., p. 265.)

There, too, in the fourteenth stanza of the poem “Resignation,” we are distinctly told that no dead has ever returned to bear witness (cf. st. 10, l. 8, “Ideal and Life”)—exactly the opposite of what is claimed by the Christian Scriptures. And, be it noted, the “better things that we are born to” clearly signifies a Stoic elevation here and now by force of soul above the chaos of fate, from which we are at liberty to select what is akin to our destiny, and profits and ennobles our living spirit.

This is a doctrine only meet for such as be very valiant, prepared for abstinences, inured to disciplines, resolved, if need were, to self-immolation; who dare to become companions in deed and truth of Herakles, passing with him from their sacrificial labors into the heaven of triumphant thought, upborne by the very flames they kindled of the world’s consuming fire.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Symbolism of Elijah’s chariot, and the bolt of Zeus upbearing Œdipus in Sophocles’ *Œdipus Coloneus*.

## IV.

The "Walk" gives an account, in chatty hexameters, of the charm exercised on the poet by nature; then we see the rise of the city, the development of human solidarity, the successive appearance of industry, commerce, art and science, followed by the terrible avatar of Liberty, which, alas! seems to imply demoralization. Then we feel the dissolution of human society is threatened, and Schiller takes refuge again in nature, which becomes a sacrament of chaste self-restraint and restores man to primitive individual innocence and social health.

Much more has been made of this poem than we think, in spite of the beautiful close, is its real desert. The "Lay of the Bell" also appears to have been much overrated as philosophical poetry. Far more significant seem to us the series "Nenia," "The Child at Play," "The Sexes," "The Dance," "Fortune," "Genius" and "The Philosophical Egoist," of which, as poetry, we should prefer the three that seem to continue each other's thought: "The Dance," "Fortune" and "Genius." "Nenia" bids us think it no poor fate to be an elegy in the mouth of love; "The Child at Play" suggests how the child often admonishes stern duty for her lack of joy and vital courage; "The Sexes" set forth the organic mystery of two fold procreation, as a symbol leading to a comprehension of divine love;<sup>18</sup> "The Dance" illustrates in most melodious verse that perfect repose which is the ordered motion of beautiful form, the explanation of which mystery is the gracious miracle involved in the dominion of "Measure," which dominion man, alas! in his play will acknowledge, and yet perversely disown, nay, even resist, in his serious avocations. Singularly beautiful is the noble plea in "Fortune" that we recognize the favorites of the gods without envy, accepting them as partial revelations of the divine mind and heart. "Genius" celebrates that fortunate man whose very whim is wisdom, whose irresponsible play turns out to be supreme achievement, for whom patient science and our proud moral disciplines have no contribution. Here, in the close of the poem, do we come nearest to that chief

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. "Woman's Worth," A. F., p. 262.

Christian conception of a "Son of God" the divine Child, perfect restorer of the race to a more than Paradisaic glory. "The Philosophic Egoist" serves as epilogue to our series, showing that nature, by turn both mother and child, cannot possibly yield her inmost secret to that philosopher who will grant no rational value or loveliness to unselfish impulses.

This remarkable sequence of poems in unrhymed elegiacs offers little difficulty to the reader who does not let himself be lulled into unintelligence by the melody of rhythm. They do not (except toward the close of "Genius" and now and then in "Fortune," and by gradual ascent throughout to the end of "The Dance") rise to any very lofty mood of poetic fury. For that very reason, perchance, they will serve as grateful comment on the more oracular lyrics in which the white heat of divine passion has fused into musical phrase the hard definiteness of Schiller's thought.

There remain two more pieces that must be painstakingly studied by any who would form a correct view of Schiller's position, namely, the "Words of Faith" and the "Words of Error."

The "Words of Faith" affirms that freedom of the quick mind; unwearied struggling for the divine in the simple spirit of the little child; and to hold steadfast above him ever as "truly existent" the "highest thought" he can think; these are the flats of the sane and saving faith. Having firm hold of such faith, one will be able surely to abstain from gross joys, and rest content in the stillness above the tumult of desire. The "Words of Folly" (rather than Error) are the supposition of a bygone or future golden age; of luck apportioned providentially in this (or any other) world according to desert (poetic justice, so called); and last (if not least) the arrogant assumption that any human theory will at any time compass the exactitude of a theometry (to quote Rossetti's clever coinage in "Soothsay"); for only the unseen and the unheard is the lovely and the true.

"It is not without, for the fool seeks it there;  
Within thee it flourishes, constant and fair."—<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Bowring's version of the closing couplet of "Words of Error."



Now, then, the remainder of Schiller's lyric poems are, for our purposes, relatively negligible. Except the following two epigrams from the "Votive Tablets" they are unnecessary for a clear perspective. These we will quote:

All may share thy thoughts: thine own is only thy feeling.

Wouldst thou own him, feel, do not imagine, thy God. (A.-F., p. 310).

Otherwise rendered, for greater faithfulness' sake:

What thou thinkest is common to all; thine own is thy feeling.

Wouldst thou make Him thine own—feel then the God thou hast thought.

After this first, which speaks for itself, consider the following:

What religion I own? thou askest:—None of thy naming.

Why? thou askest again:—Why, for religion itself. (A.-F. p. 313.)

Less gracefully, perhaps:

What religion do I embrace? Well, none thou hast mentioned.

Wherefore, none of them all? Even for religion's sake.

From these two epigrams we gather, if we take them seriously, that, whatever dogma Schiller might have put forth, he himself would have found his very own merely in the quite incommunicable states of feeling associated therewith—half vibrant overtones and undertones—mystic æolian harmonies; further, that for the sake of the spontaneous reality of his religion, he could not accept even his very own, if presented to him in the hard objective form supplied by a scholastic elaboration, or a series of historical experiments by the method of trial and failure such as the Church has set forth through her conciliar decrees.

And this have all the poet-prophets from the beginning declared with a singular unanimity, differing in all else. Here invariably do they part company (not at times sans sorrow) with the positive dogmatist (orthodox alike and heterodox); to ally themselves with the mystics, however disreputable; who whatever their self-supposed convictions of a communicable sort, by making God one with their will, find him in experience condescending to unity with their conscious spirit; and who like the poet make no effort to render a rational account of what be-

falleth their spirits rapt into the heaven of adoring vision, and direct knowing of God.

For Schiller the "highest thought" was the intellectual symbol; and the "little child" or the "genius" the human symbol of diety. For Schiller such a rapture of faith as his, was more than compensation for all sacrifices required, from the neophyte's, even to the initiate's into the supreme mysteries of life. To Schiller, science and morality were but scaffoldings necessary for the religious man in his irreligious hours, that he may then also approach the stuff of his life, and aid in its taking the divine form.

But there is for Schiller no one pattern. Each must yearn to "the whole;"—and each, if he would resemble the highest, must strive to become completely himself,<sup>15</sup> and establish straightway his present freedom in the ideal,<sup>16</sup> ere fate makes him adventure into the future dark of death.

## V.

How easy for the reader to cry "and is this all?" What new thing has your seer beheld, that his poems should by a whole people be felt to have the authority almost of Scripture? Here then do we come again upon what constitutes the very essential preciousness of religious poetry, meaning thereby such poetry as proceeds from a spontaneous individually experienced religion.

The man is always more than the sum of his deeds, of his sayings, and of the accidents that befell him. The hero outlives many on account of his service, many a poetic or dogmatic apotheosis of his person. So likewise the poem. It has a right to be accredited also with all that its power of suggestion may yet legitimately bring to any human spirit. With no one reader even does any reading, however deeply felt, exhaust for all time its content. Other readings at other seasons will overshadow him, to his delighted surprise, with thitherto undivined hallowings of soul.

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<sup>15</sup> "Votive Tablets." Duty of all and a problem. pp. 309-310.

<sup>16</sup> *Die Idealsche Freiheit.*

What then? Will you undertake to confute the poet-prophet? If you do, he but eludes you. You meet him even in the precincts you thought he, heretic that he is, might not be allowed to profane. Behold him there throned as the very symbol of the deity you intended to adore in your self-righteous solitude and uniqueness!

And perhaps Schiller's greatness consists after all in just that power of uttering himself with a thrilling earnestness, while yet always reserving for his words a breadth of possible application; never quite narrowing his stated principles to the suggestive text or the particular dramatic symbol; leaving them to adopt for the reader in his own meditation other more sympathetic expressions, confident that they must in the end return for the happiest local instance and poetic presentment to the text or dramatic symbol Schiller adopted.

Hence, after four generations of reading, Schiller has lost no freshness; and even to such of us, as would in cold blood disagree with his doctrine, his lyric utterance continues to have human poignancy, and the most convincing and persuasive power. Blessed surely are the Germans who quite instinctively and sincerely love Schiller, and who have besides the world's only Schiller so to love!

WILLIAM NORMAN GUTHRIE.

The University of the South.